

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

FAS is proud to be an equal opportunity employer and provider. As the lead Agency for international affairs, I strongly support our Agency's dedication to civil rights and to creating an environment that embraces diversity, inclusion and fairness.

As we work to fulfill our mission of linking U.S. agriculture to the world, it is the policy of the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) to continue to provide equal opportunity employment to all employees and employment applicants, regardless of race, color, age, religion, gender, ethnicity, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation or identification, political ideology, or marital or family status. This policy relates to all employment decisions.

FAS will provide a work environment for its employees that is free of discrimination and that promotes equal employment opportunities and equitable treatment. Our Agency will not tolerate any form of harassment or retaliation. Equally important is the civil rights requirement of this Agency to ensure that no person is subjected to prohibited discrimination in Federally Assisted and Federally Conducted programs and services. Any applicant for or participant in programs and/or activities sponsored by FAS will be treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. FAS program managers and providers are to ensure that if discrimination occurs, prompt and appropriate action is taken to identify these conditions and to completely eliminate such biased factors from any and all FAS programs and services.

All of us- employees, managers and supervisors - share the responsibility to ensure that each individual is treated with dignity and respect. Any employee who feels that his or her rights have been violated under this policy should inform his or her immediate supervisor and/or the FAS Office of Civil Rights.

I know that all FAS employees will do their part to ensure the success of these guiding principles.

Suzanne Hale
Acting Administrator
Foreign Agricultural Service
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Diversity, inclusion and a discrimination free environment are key factors to the success of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

The mission of the Office of Civil Rights is to:

- Ensure equal access to Foreign Agricultural Service's programs and activities
- Achieve a bias and harassment free environment
- Ensure that there is representation of all groups and at all levels of FAS
- Assist in building a diverse team

Our Primary Responsibilities Are To:

- Enhance workforce effectiveness by identifying and eliminating barriers to employment
- Monitor and analyze workforce demographics to address recruitment, career development and retention initiatives
- Provide FAS managers guidance and advice on EEO and Civil Rights matters
- Improve program delivery to our customers through strategic planning



EEO Counseling and Complaint Process

The USDA EEO Informal Complaint System covers individual and class complaints of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, marital status and reprisal for previous EEO activity. A person with a disability is one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment. Any employee or applicant for employment may file a complaint.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

This program describes a variety of informal processes for resolving conflicts that emphasize collaborative problem solving. It differs from traditional adjudication methods such as litigation, hearings, and agency administrative processing and appeals. ADR offers the parties the opportunity for an early, informal resolution of disputes in a mutually satisfactory fashion. ADR methods include mediation, facilitation, conciliation, and peer panels. ADR usually costs less and uses fewer resources than traditional administrative or adjudicative processes, particularly processes that include a hearing or litigation.

Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs)

SEP activities and support are an integral part of the Civil Rights mission. Within their respective duties, SEP Managers (SEPMs) assist the Office of Civil Rights, in ensuring that equal opportunity is present in all aspects of FAS' programs and services. At FAS the SEPMs are: American Indian/Alaskan Native; Asian American/Pacific Islander; Black Emphasis; Disability Employment and Awareness; Federal Women's; and Hispanic Employment.

Compliance Monitoring

FAS is committed to ensuring that all qualified individuals and businesses have equal access to Agency programs and activities. Nondiscrimination in program delivery is accomplished by:

Compliance Reviews of programs receiving Federal financial assistance from FAS and programs directly conducted by FAS

Civil Rights Impact Analyses of new and revised program initiatives to avoid potential negative impacts on traditionally underserved groups

Civil Rights Training delivered annually to all FAS employees and key partners in the delivery of FAS programs

Targeted Outreach

The Office of Civil Right strives to remove barriers to the access of FAS programs. We do this via strategic partnerships and dissemination of program information to traditionally underserved audiences such as:

- Minority Colleges and Universities
- Small Farmers and Ranchers
- Small and Minority-owned Businesses

